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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001321

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS  
LONDON FOR POL/BELL  
NSC FOR DORMANDY

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT APPOINTS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE CHIEFS

Classified By: Charge Elisabeth Millard, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

ON THE APPOINTMENT OF DDC CHIEFS  
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1. (SBU) On June 13, the government appointed chairmen and vice chairmen of the District Development Committees (DDC) in 25 out of 75 districts of the country in accordance with the Local Self Governance Act of 1999. The Ministry of Local Development stated that the remaining 50 districts' DDC chiefs and members would be nominated soon. The posts of heads and members of the DDCs had remained vacant after the five-year term of the members expired in 2002. The government headed by Surya Bahadur Thapa in 2003 had appointed the chiefs and members of the DDC, but following the appointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba as Prime Minister in June 2004, the government passed the responsibility to conduct the work of the DDC to the Local Development Office of the respective districts.

REACTION TO THE APPOINTMENTS  
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2. (C) Arjun Narsingh K.C., Spokesperson of the Nepali Congress (NC), told EmbOff that the appointment of the DDC chiefs indicated that King Gyanendra was trying to bring the entire power structure of the government under his grip "to maintain his autocratic rule." Kashi Nath Adhikari, Central Committee Member of the CPN (UML), concurred and said that the appointment of the DDC chiefs was part of the King's roadmap, and was a "continuation of his dictatorship." Minendra Rijal, Spokesperson of the Nepali Congress (Democratic), stated that the DDC chiefs' appointments was a "conspiracy of the King to prolong his despotic regime," which showed that the King was trying to form his own political party.

COMMENT  
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3. (C) The parties have ignored the fact that a prior government also appointed people to these posts. We have heard mixed reviews of the appointees, but are unsure how much DDC work had been occurring prior to the posts being refilled. Following on the heels of the King's reinstituting and appointing zonal and regional administrators, the King will have to overcome the political parties' perception that he is consolidating his power.

MILLARD